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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER

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## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

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THE increased demands upon my time from business matters outside of THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, representing interests that I do not care to sacrifice, made it desirable for me to resign my position as editor of this publication, and my connection with it ceased with the previous (May) issue.

My confidence in the continued and increased success of the magazine is established by the knowledge that I am succeeded in its editorial management by Mr. THOMAS A. KENNETT, a gentleman whose capacity for the position and whose wide acquaintance in the trades is so well known that it needs no endorsement of mine. He will unquestionably keep the paper at the high standard I have set as the most artistic and instructive publication in its line, and he contemplates new features that will, I doubt not, prove valuable to advertisers and readers alike.

All personal communications will reach me if addressed to this office.

A. CURTIS BOND.

THE month just ended has been marked by one incident which is fraught with more prospect of good for the art education of the masses than anything that has ever before happened in this country. After many years it has dawned upon the very respectable and public spirited gentlemen who have hitherto controlled the minority among the trustees of the Museum of Natural History that the institution belongs to the people of the City of New York, that in fact it is public and not private property. In response to the almost universal demand of the actual owners of the museum the managers have agreed to open its rapidly accumulating treasures on Sundays. They ask for \$15,000 annually to pay for the expense, and we believe the new movement would be cheap at four times that cost.

RECENT donations, such as those of Miss Wolfe and Messrs. Vanderbilt, Seney and Hilton, have laid the foundation and indeed a large part of the superstructure of one of the greatest collections of modern paintings in the world. The fashion has

been set and doubtless wealthy men will hereafter continue to add to the value of the Metropolitan Museum. But a great institution like this should be many sided, and it is to be hoped that some large minded citizen will do for the art workers of America what the Kensington Museum and the archaeological collection in the Hotel Cluny are doing for those of England and France. The next step ought to be in the addition of rare specimens of furniture, wood carving, textiles, etc.

Thus far the most intelligent contribution to the cause of education in the Industrial Arts has been the magnificent collection of American woods presented to the Museum of Natural History by Mr. Morris K. Jessup. Here at a glance the wood worker can see specimens of every tree grown in the United States, and with each a map showing the location and extent of production. Moreover, each is shown under various conditions, rough, polished, cross sawn or quartered, and on each is marked all the details of specific gravity, breaking strain, ash, etc., necessary for an intelligent understanding of the value and capabilities of the wood.

It is always gratifying to notice a diminution in the number of idiots in a community, and it is especially gratifying to obtain that information from so reliable a source as the United States Bureau of Statistics. From a recent issue of the highly interesting if not exciting publication of that office, we learn that last year the importation of carpets into the United States amounted to about 800,000 yards. Since 1873 the amount of foreign goods used has been steadily decreasing. We have not at hand the exact figures, but according to our best recollection the number of yards imported in that year into New York alone was about 3,000,000. The goods which are sold as "English" in the carpet stores throughout the country probably amount to 20,000,000 yards annually, and this fact illustrates one of the most curious delusions of the day. If the ingrain, body Brussels and tapestry looms in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut were worked to their full capacity, the product would, at a moderate computation, be over 75,000,000 yards yearly. This is probably just about double the output, but even on this basis it is evident that of the hundreds of thousands of people who every season buy "English" carpets some must be deceived.

OF foreign carpets imported Boston continues to take more in proportion than any other city. It is singular that people so keenly alive to their own interests and of so high an order of intelligence as the citizens of Boston, can not be taught the absolute, undeniable fact that a forty-eight ounce Wilton, such as is made by at least two concerns in their own immediate vicinity, is the best carpet in the world.

PUBLIC furniture is a public trust, and when in the course of human events it becomes necessary for the people of New York to furnish a home for its Governors, an ordinary regard for the principles of good taste would seem to suggest that the selection of such furniture and decorations should be entrusted to some one who by training and experience is qualified for the task. And yet one fine day last month Governor Hill who, without calling into question his acknowledged ability in other lines, has not won an exceedingly wide reputation as a decorative artist, jumped on board a train, came to this city, dined with Colonel Lamont, visited Wall Street, selected the furniture for the Executive Mansion, and returned the same night to the busy scenes of a rapidly ending session of the Legislature. As he left he remarked to a reporter that he had seen so many styles that he doubted whether he should be satisfied with his selection. If

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current report about some of the "styles" he chose is to be credited it is more than likely that a good many other persons will be equally disappointed. It should be remembered that the people of Albany live under the shadow of a capitol which, whatever may be its faults, possesses some of the noblest specimens of decorative work to be found in any similar building either here or abroad.

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WITH this issue we begin the publication of a series of practical articles upon wood carving, which can not fail to be of interest to thousands of our readers, since they are to be adapted to the needs both of amateurs and professionals. They are from the pen of Mr. W. N. Brown, of London, widely known as the author of "The Ancient Ecclesiastical Woodwork of England," "Working in Brass," "The History of Decorative Art," "Wood Turning for Amateurs," "A Manual of Wood Engraving," "The Arch, Dome and Vault." Engravings illustrative of the text will accompany each article.

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STATEMENTS in the daily papers that the wall paper pool was broken, that the manager had resigned, etc., served materially to injure the business of the members during the month. The pool is simply a yearly agreement, and is terminable on the 30th of June. We regret to say that it is doubtful whether it will be renewed, as outside competition and inside cheating have created some dissatisfaction.

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A POOL among producers is not infrequently a positive benefit to consumers. In view of the popular opinion of such infamous monopolies as the Standard Oil Trust, this idea has probably never occurred to many of our readers, and yet a little reflection will doubtless convince them that it is true. There is little question that, on the whole, the trunk railroad pool was an advantage to the business community, and we have no hesitation in saying that the pooling arrangement among manufacturers of wall papers has enured to the benefit as much of the consumer as of the producer. One thing is certain, had not some such arrangement been made the art of making wall paper would hardly have reached its present high estate in the country. At that time none of the manufacturers was making any money and, as a result, many were lowering the grade of their goods. There is considerable human nature even in manufacturers, and, like most of us, they will do better work when well paid than when receiving starvation wages or no wages at all. The community in the long run suffers when any considerable portion of it is working at a loss.

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IT is true that the manufacturers were immediately enabled to largely increase the price of certain classes of papers. But on the other hand there was an equalization which brought compensation. Before the pool the few makers of the very best goods, cut off from any chance of profit on the lower grades by the cut-throat competition, had but a limited market, and were compelled to charge extreme prices. The best things were therefore beyond the reach of all save the very rich. Meanwhile each maker of cheap papers, working on a fixed price, was compelled to compete for trade by making better and more artistic patterns than his rivals. The result has been that while the poor man has been obliged to pay more for his wall paper he got something for his money which did not outrage every sense of decency and fitness. Nor was this pool in any sense a monopoly, for many manufacturers remained outside, and we have one in mind who, a few hundred miles from New York, went on increasing his production and establishing a wide reputation for his goods, undisturbed by any fear of the pool, and suffering no injury at its hands until he chose to join it.

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THE truth is, these matters are generally looked at through the mists of prejudice. An honest, legitimate business combination is simply a good dog with a bad name. Nevertheless its loss is sometimes severely felt. When some years ago the five leading manufacturers of carpet linings formed a combination and ceased cutting each other's throats, they were enabled by advancing prices and saving money through a single administration in place of five, to make a better and more uniform article than had ever been seen before. Merchants were satisfied because each was certain that he bought as cheaply as his competitor. An act of folly on the part of the management broke the combination. Since then chaos has reigned. "What song the sirens sung," said Sir Thomas Brown, "or by what name Achilles was known when he hid himself among women, though difficult matters, are not beyond all conjecture." Were the old gentleman alive to-day he might add that the price of carpet lining is one of those things which is past finding out.

A VERY considerable portion of the ornamental architectural work of the Italian Renaissance period was in terra cotta, and looking to the admiration those designs have continued to excite, it is matter of surprise with many that only now have its decorative resources in structural erections come to be fully appreciated. Admitting of the sharpest moldings, though liable to shrink in firing, a shrinkage which, being unequal, often gives the appearance of clusters of ornaments, it allows also of endless duplication. Whatever can be accomplished in molding can be accomplished in terra cotta.

The Italian practice has been followed of building mantelpieces of terra cotta, many of most imposing appearance, with their pillared supports, and fronts and entablatures adorned with relief work. Some of the best applications of relief work are to interior wall friezes. The Renaissance spirit which ushered it in will retain it.

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ANOTHER belated application of a decorative art is that of embossed leather. Ever since the expulsion of the Moors the Spanish people have delighted in decorating their apartments in hangings and furniture coverings of this supple material, which with a texture that lends an important aid to color effects, admits of modified relief effects.

Of all other styles the Moresque, with its capricious but characteristic features, would seem admirably adapted for leather ornamentation. This embossed leather is well suited to a room, whether of a quiet, reposeful character or resplendent with brilliant objects, according to the style and embossing colors introduced. In addition to its luxurious aspect its durability is to be considered.

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ENAMEL designs are probably destined in the future to contribute to interior decoration to a larger degree than hitherto, particularly in the pictorial line, owing to the improvement effected in the revival of the art of the old workers of Limoges by which the fluxes in a composition are fired at different temperatures. This allowing of the production of vitrified pictures on large sheets of metal, the artist is thus enabled to proceed leisurely with his operations.

The plate, which is to form the foundation of the design, is first wholly covered with a plate of enamel, white or of some light tint, opaque or transparent, or partly one and partly the other, the plate being previously brought to a white heat. Each portion of the enamel ground on which color incorporated with a vitrious flux is to be applied is coated beforehand with an essential oil which, after aiding in binding the colors, evaporates. As each touch is given by the artist the enamel is fired.

The vitrified pictures have a soft yet brilliant appearance, and may be imbedded in walls, or hung up in frames, or inserted in over-mantels, cabinets, or other articles of furniture.

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THE art of embossing colored glass merely consists in dissolving the thin veneer of color fused on one side, and leaving the clear glass exposed in those parts from which the color is removed, and which color is simply a thin vitrified veneer to the plain glass. The lettering or ornament having been formed on tracing paper, this is attached to one side of the glass, and all the parts not intended to be bit out, is covered with Brunswick black. A wall of soft wax is then formed round the margin of the glass, and a quantity of fluoric acid poured over the entire surface. The acid is watched, to arrest its progress immediately that it has done its proper work. Elaborate and often elegant designs thus produced are common in the window glass of first class buildings.

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IN the production of the cheaper descriptions of wall paper, the old primitive practice of printing with handblocks is continued, a separate block being used for each color. The finer, sharper and more artistic colorings are impressed by engraved steel rollers. It is by wooden rollers that the variations of structural form imitative of tissues are produced, whilst the pulp is in a plastic state. Embossed paper, in which the whole or a portion of the ornamental figures are raised, is produced by steel dies. Flock paper designs are executed by sprinkling on a ground prepared with glutinous material powdered textile stuffs previously dyed.

